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WISDOM AND BEAUTY
FROM CONRAD

Wisdom and Beauty
from Conrad

Selected and arranged by
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PREFATORY NOTE

A CAREFUL reader of Mr. Conrad's novels soon discovers that the author is something more than a born story-teller, although he is that unmistakably, and more than a literary artist, supreme as he is in that rôle. Apart from Conrad's genius for making pictures and the atmosphere which fixes them, there is an all-pervading quality which distinguishes him among modern novelists, the quality of wisdom. It does not express itself in superficial flashy epigram, could indeed hardly do so, since it is the outcome of a wide knowledge of human nature, and the philosophy of a man who, like another writer of two thousand years ago, has gone far out on the spokes of the universe, and looked over the "flaming walls of the world." Like the older writer, he has come back perhaps sadder, but infinitely more tolerant of man's "so mad endeavours."

The brooding reflections and comments

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of "Marlow," who under one name and another is to be found in all his stories, reveal Mr. Conrad as a profound thinker, made wise by experience and tolerant by knowledge of the complexities of human life. The philosophy discovered in these passages may not perhaps tend to a light-hearted view of life and man's destiny, but even its occasional irony cannot obscure the deep sympathy that the author has for his fellows. And if the sententiæ of these passages go too deep to make for easy happiness, they most certainly stimulate a reader to face courageously whatever may be before him.

The idea of this gathering of passages is due to one who has found infinite delight in the delicate beauty of Mr. Conrad's pictures, and no little heartening from his wisdom. It remains to add that while the actual selection of passages has been made by his friend, Miss M. Harriet M. Capes, with his approval, Mr. Conrad is not in the remotest sense responsible for the book.

A. M.

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The list of books from which excerpts have been taken is as follows :—

An Outcast of the Islands.

Tales of Unrest.

Almayer's Folly.

The Arrow of Gold.

Chance.

A Set of Six.

The Mirror of the Sea.

Under Western Eyes.

The Secret Agent.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

Lord Jim.

Within the Tides.

'Twiixt Land and Sea.

Youth.

Nostramo.

Some Reminiscences.



WISDOM AND BEAUTY FROM CONRAD

A WORK that aspires, however humbly, to the condition of art, should carry its justification in every line. And art may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life, what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential—their one illuminating and convincing quality—the very truth of their existence.

* * *

Confronted by the same enigmatical spectacle, the artist descends within himself,

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and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal. His appeal is made to our less obvious capacities: to that part of our nature which, because of the war-like conditions of existence, is necessarily kept out of sight within the more resisting and hard qualities—like the vulnerable body within the steel armour. [His appeal is less loud, more profound, more stirring—and sooner forgotten. Yet its effect endures for ever. The changing wisdom of successive generations discards ideas, questions facts, demolishes theories. But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom; to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition—and, therefore, more permanently enduring. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, of beauty and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation—and to the subtle, but invincible, conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable

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hearts ; to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.

* * *

In a single-minded attempt of that kind, if one be deserving and fortunate, one may perchance attain to such clearness of sincerity that at last the presented vision of regret or pity, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity ; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other, and all mankind to the visible world.

* * *

To arrest, for the space of a breath, the hands busy about the work of the earth, and compel men entranced by the sight of distant goals to glance for a moment at the

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surrounding vision of form and colour, of sunshine and shadows ; to make them pause for a look, for a sigh, for a smile—such is the aim, difficult and evanescent, and reserved only for a very few to achieve. But sometimes, by the deserving and fortunate, even that task is accomplished. And when it is accomplished—behold!—all the truth of life is there ! A moment of vision, a sigh, a smile—and the return to an eternal rest.

Preface to The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

FROM CONRAD

AN artist is a man of action, whether he creates a personality, invents an expedient, or finds the issue of a complicated situation.

The Mirror of the Sea.

THE attainment of proficiency, the pushing of your skill with attention to the most delicate shades of excellence, is a matter of vital concern. Efficiency of a practically flawless kind may be reached naturally in the struggle for bread. But there is something beyond—a higher point, a subtle and unmistakable touch of love and pride beyond mere skill; almost an inspiration which gives to all work that finish which is almost art—which *is* art.

The Mirror of the Sea.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THOSE who read me know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas ; so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests, notably, amongst others, on the idea of Fidelity. At a time when nothing which is not revolutionary in some way or other can expect to attract much attention I have not been revolutionary in my writings. The revolutionary spirit is mighty convenient in this, that it frees one from all scruples as regards ideas. Its hard, absolute optimism is repulsive to my mind by the menace of fanaticism and intolerance it contains. No doubt one should smile at these things ; but, imperfect Esthete, I am no better Philosopher. All claim to special righteousness awakes in me that scorn and anger from which a philosophical mind should be free.

A Familiar Preface to Some Reminiscences.

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FAITHFULNESS is a great restraint, the strongest bond laid upon the self-will of men and ships on this globe of land and sea.

The Mirror of the Sea.

THE real significance of crime is in its being a breach of faith with the community of mankind.

Lord Jim.

THE ethical view of the universe involves us at last in so many cruel and absurd contradictions, where the last vestiges of faith, hope, charity, and even of reason itself, seem ready to perish, that I have come to suspect that the aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. I would fondly believe that its object is purely spectacular : a spectacle for awe, love, adoration, or hate, if you like, but in this view—and in this view alone—never for despair ! Those visions, delicious or poig-

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nant, are a moral end in themselves. The rest is our affair—the laughter, the tears, the tenderness, the indignation, the high tranquillity of a steeled heart, the detached curiosity of a subtle mind—that's our affair ! And the unwearied self-forgetful attention to every phase of the living universe reflected in our consciousness may be our appointed task on this earth. A task in which fate has perhaps engaged nothing of us except our conscience, gifted with a voice in order to bear true testimony to the visible wonder, the haunting terror, the infinite passion and the illimitable serenity ; to the supreme law and the abiding mystery of the sublime spectacle.

Some Reminiscences.

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THE sea, perhaps because of its saltness, roughens the outside but keeps sweet the kernel of its servant's soul. The old sea, the sea of many years ago, whose servants were devoted slaves and went from youth to age or to a sudden grave without needing to open the book of life, because they could look at Eternity reflected on the element that gave the life and dealt the death. Like a beautiful and unscrupulous woman, the sea of the past was glorious in its smiles, irresistible in its anger, capricious, enticing, illogical, irresponsible ; a thing to love, a thing to fear. It cast a spell, it gave joy, it lulled gently into boundless faith ; then with quick and causeless anger it killed. But its cruelty was redeemed by the charm of its inscrutable mystery, by the immensity of its promise, by the supreme witchery of its possible favour. Strong men with childlike hearts were faithful to it, were content to live by its grace—to die by its will.

An Outcast of the Islands.

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THE cradle of oversea traffic and of the art of naval combats, the Mediterranean, apart from all the associations of adventure and glory, the common heritage of all mankind, makes a tender appeal to a seaman. It has sheltered the infancy of his craft. He looks upon it as a man may look at a vast nursery in an old, old mansion where innumerable generations of his own people have learned to walk. I say his own people because, in a sense, all sailors belong to one family: all are descended from that adventurous and shaggy ancestor who, bestriding a shapeless log and paddling with a crooked branch, accomplished the first coasting-trip in a sheltered bay ringing with the admiring howls of his tribe.

The Mirror of the Sea.

FROM CONRAD

It's true the sea is an uncertain element, but no sailor remembers this in the presence of its bewitching power any more than a lover ever thinks of the proverbial inconstancy of women.

Chance.

A SAILOR finds a deep feeling of security in the exercise of his calling. The exacting life of the sea has this advantage over the life of the earth, that its claims are simple and cannot be evaded.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

I HAVE observed that profane men living in ships, like the holy men gathered together in monasteries, develop traits of profound resemblance. This must be because the service of the sea and the service of a temple are both detached from the errors and vanities of a world which follows no severe rule. The men of the sea understand each other very well in their view of earthly things, for simplicity is a good counsellor and isolation not a bad educator. A turn of mind composed of innocence and scepticism is common to them all, with the addition of an unexpected insight into motives, as of disinterested lookers-on at a game.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

THERE are on earth no actors too humble and obscure not to have a gallery ; that gallery which envenoms the play by stealthy jeers, counsels of anger, amused comments or words of perfidious compassion. . . . At sea, you know, there is no gallery. You hear no tormenting echoes of your own littleness there, where either a great elemental voice roars defiantly under the sky, or else an elemental silence seems to be part of the infinite stillness of the universe.

Chance.

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NOTHING is easier for a man who has, as the phrase goes, "followed the sea" with reverence and affection, than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled—the great knights-errant of the sea. It had borne all the ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time, from the *Golden Hind* returning with her round flanks full of treasure, to be visited by the Queen's Highness and thus pass out of the gigantic tale, to the *Erebus* and *Terror*, bound on other conquests—and that never returned. It had known the ships and the men. They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith—the adventurers and the settlers; kings' ships and the ships of men on 'Change; captains, admirals, the dark "interlopers" of the Eastern trade, and the

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commissioned "generals" of East India fleets. Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they had all gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! . . . The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.

Youth. Heart of Darkness.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.

Youth. Heart of Darkness.

FROM CONRAD

No illumination can sweep all mystery out of the world. After the departed darkness the shadows remain, more mysterious because as if more enduring ; and one feels a dread of them from which one was free before. What if they were to be victorious at the last ? They, or perhaps what lurks in them : fear, deception, desire, disillusion—all silent at first before the song of triumphant love vibrating in the light. Yes. Silent. Even desire itself ! All silent. But not for long !

The Arrow of Gold.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE Evil One, with his single passion of satanic pride for the only motive, is yet, on a larger, modern view, allowed to be not quite so black as he used to be painted. With what greater latitude, then, should we appraise the exact shade of mere mortal man, with his many passions and his miserable ingenuity in error, always dazzled by the base glitter of mixed motives, everlastingly betrayed by a short-sighted wisdom.

Under Western Eyes.

FROM CONRAD

FEW men realise that their life, the very essence of their character, their capabilities and their audacities, are only the expression of their belief in the safety of their surroundings. The courage, the composure, the confidence ; the emotions and principles ; every great and every insignificant thought belongs not to the individual but to the crowd : to the crowd that believes blindly in the irresistible force of its institutions and of its morals, in the power of its police and of its opinion. But the contact with pure, unmitigated savagery, with primitive nature and primitive man, brings sudden and profound trouble into the heart. To the sentiment of being alone of one's kind, to the clear perception of the loneliness of one's thoughts, of one's sensations—to the negation of the habitual, which is safe, there is added the affirmation of the unusual, which is dangerous ; a suggestion of things vague, uncontrollable, and repulsive, whose discomposing intrusion excites the imagination and tries the civilised nerves of the foolish and the wise alike.

Tales of Unrest. An Outpost of Progress.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

A MAN'S real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love.

Under Western Eyes.

CONSCIOUSLY or unconsciously, men are proud of their firmness, steadfastness of purpose, directness of aim. They go straight towards their desire, to the accomplishment of virtue—sometimes of crime—in an uplifting persuasion of their firmness. They walk the road of life, the road fenced in by their tastes, prejudices, disdains or enthusiasms, generally honest, invariably stupid, and are proud of never losing their way. If they do stop, it is to look for a moment over the hedges that make them safe, to look at the misty valleys, at the distant peaks, at cliffs and morasses, at the dark forests and the hazy plains where other human beings grope their days painfully away, stumbling over the bones of the wise, over the unburied remains of their predecessors who died alone,

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in gloom or in sunshine, half-way from anywhere. The man of purpose does not understand, and goes on, full of contempt. He never loses his way. He knows where he is going and what he wants. Travelling on, he achieves great length without any breadth, and battered, besmirched and weary, he touches the goal at last ; he grasps the reward of his perseverance, of his virtue, of his healthy optimism : an untruthful tombstone over a dark and soon forgotten grave.

An Outcast of the Islands.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

As to women, they know that the clamour for opportunities for them to become something that they cannot be, is as reasonable as if mankind at large started asking for opportunities of winning immortality in this world, in which death is the very condition of life. You must understand that I am not talking here of material existence. That naturally is implied ; but you won't maintain that a woman who, say, enlisted, for instance (there have been cases), has conquered her place in the world. She has only got her living in it—which is quite meritorious, but not quite the same thing.

Chance.

A WOMAN with a masculine mind is not a being of superior efficiency ; she is simply a phenomenon of imperfect differentiation—interestingly barren and without importance.

Nostromo.

FROM CONRAD

WHEN a woman takes to any sort of unlawful man-trade, there's nothing to beat her in the way of thoroughness. It's true that you will find people who'll tell you that this terrific virulence in breaking through all established things is altogether the fault of men. Such people will ask you with a clever air, why the servile wars were always the most fierce, desperate and atrocious of wars. And you may make such answer as you can—even the eminently feminine one, if you choose, so typical of the women's literal mind, "I don't see what this has to do with it!" How many arguments have been knocked over (I won't say knocked down) by these few words!

Chance.

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OF all the forms offered to us by life, it is the one demanding a couple to realize it fully which is the most imperative. Pairing off is the fate of mankind, and if two beings thrown together, mutually attracted, resist the necessity, fail in understanding and voluntarily stop short of the—the embrace, in the noblest meaning of the word, then they are committing a sin against life, the call of which is simple. Perhaps sacred. And the punishment of it is an invasion of complexity, a tormenting, forcibly tortuous involution of feelings, the deepest form of suffering from which indeed something significant may come at last, which may be criminal or heroic, may be madness or wisdom—or even a straight if despairing decision.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

It is a fact that in every man (not in every woman) there lives a lover ; a lover who is called out in all his potentialities often by the most insignificant little things—as long as they come at the psychological moment : the glimpse of a face at an unusual angle, an evanescent attitude, the curve of a cheek often looked at before, perhaps, but then, at the moment, charged with astonishing significance. These are great mysteries, of course. Magic signs.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

MEN, I mean really masculine men, those whose generations have evolved an ideal woman, are often very timid. Who wouldn't be before the ideal? It's your sentimental trifle, who has just missed being nothing at all, who is enterprising, simply because it is easy to appear enterprising when one does not mean to put one's belief to the test.

Chance.

THE beauty of the loved woman exists in the beauties of Nature. The swelling outlines of the hills, the curves of a coast, the free sinuosities of a river are less suave than the harmonious lines of her body, and when she moves, gliding lightly, the grace of her progress suggests the power of occult forces which rule the fascinating aspects of the visible world.

'Twi'xt Land and Sea. Freya of the Seven Isles.

FROM CONRAD

WHERE is the man—I mean a real sentient man—who does not remember vaguely having been deserted in the fullness of possession by some one or something more precious than life? . . . our common fate fastens upon the women with a peculiar cruelty. It does not punish like a master, but inflicts lingering torment, as if to gratify a secret, unappeasable spite. One would think that, appointed to rule on earth, it seeks to revenge itself upon the beings that come nearest to rising above the trammels of earthly caution; for it is only women who manage to put at times into their love an element just palpable enough to give one a fright—an extra-terrestrial touch. I ask myself with wonder—how the world can look to them—whether it has the shape and substance *we* know, the air *we* breathe! Sometimes I fancy it must be a region of unreasonable sublimities seething with the excitement of their adventurous souls, lighted by the glory of all possible risks and renunciations.

Lord Jim.

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BEING a woman is a terribly difficult trade, since it consists principally of dealings with men.

Chance.

THERE is hardly a woman in the world, no matter how hard, depraved or frantic, in whom something of the maternal instinct does not survive, unconsumed like a salamander, in the fires of the most abandoned passion.

Chance.

THE sincerest of women will make no unnecessary confidences to a man. And this is as it should be.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

I CALL a woman sincere when she volunteers a statement resembling remotely in form what she really would like to say, what she really thinks ought to be said if it were not for the necessity to spare the stupid sensitiveness of men. The women's rougher, simpler, more upright judgment embraces the whole truth, which their tact, their mistrust of masculine idealism, ever prevents them from speaking in its entirety. And their tact is unerring. We could not stand women speaking the truth. We could not bear it. It would cause infinite misery and bring about most awful disturbances in this rather mediocre, but still idealistic fool's paradise in which each of us lives his own little life—the unit in the great sum of existence. And they know it. They are merciful.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

IN every, even terrestrial, mystery there is as it were a sacred core. A sustained commentary on love is not fit for every eye. A universal experience is exactly the sort of thing which is most difficult to appraise justly in a particular instance.

The Arrow of Gold.

FROM CONRAD

As to honour—you know—it's a very fine medieval inheritance which women never got hold of. It wasn't theirs. Since it may be laid as a general principle that women always get what they want, we must suppose they didn't want it. In addition, they are devoid of decency, I mean masculine decency. Cautiousness too is foreign to them—the heavy reasonable cautiousness which is our glory. And if they had it, they would make of it a thing of passion, so that its own mother—I mean the mother of cautiousness—wouldn't recognize it. Prudence with them is a matter of thrill like the rest of sublunary contrivances. "Sensation at any cost" is their secret device. All the virtues are not enough for them; they want also all the crimes for their own. And why? Because in such completeness there is power—the kind of thrill they love most.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

It is lucky that small things please women. And it is not silly of them to be thus pleased. It is in small things that the deepest loyalty, that which they need most, the loyalty of the passing moment, is best expressed.

Chance.

A WOMAN may be a fool, a sleepy fool, an agitated fool, a too awfully noxious fool, and she may even be simply stupid. But she is never dense. She's never made of wood through and through as some men are. There is in woman always, somewhere, a spring. Whatever men don't know about women (and it may be a lot, or it may be very little), men and even fathers do know that much. And that is why so many men are afraid of them.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

WOMEN find their inspiration in the stress of moments that for us are merely awful, absurd, or futile.

Lord Jim.

IF women were not a force of nature, blind in its strength and capricious in its power, they would not be mistrusted. As it is one can't help it. . . . But man has captured electricity too. It lights him on his way, it warms his home, it will even cook his dinner for him—very much like a woman. But what sort of conquest would you call it? He knows nothing of it. He has got to be mighty careful what he is about with his captive. And the greater the demand he makes on it in the exultation of his pride the more likely it is to turn on him and burn him to a cinder.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

Odi et amo may well be the confession of those who consciously or blindly have surrendered their existence to the fascination of the sea. All the tempestuous passions of mankind's young days, the love of loot and the love of glory, the love of adventure and the love of danger, with the great love of the unknown and vast dreams of dominion and power, have passed like images reflected from a mirror, leaving no record upon the mysterious face of the sea. Impenetrable and heartless, the sea has given nothing of itself to the suitors for its precarious favours. . . . For all its fascination that has lured so many to a violent death, its immensity has never been loved as the mountains, the plains, the desert itself, have been loved.

The Mirror of the Sea.

FROM CONRAD

IF you would know the age of the earth, look upon the sea in a storm. The greyness of the whole immense surface, the wind furrows upon the faces of the waves, the great masses of foam, tossed about and waving, like matted white locks, give to the sea in a gale an appearance of hoary age, lustreless, dull, without gleams, as though it had been created before light itself.

The Mirror of the Sea.

THE sea of the past was an incomparably beautiful mistress, with inscrutable face, with cruel and promising eyes. The sea of to-day is a used-up drudge, wrinkled and defaced by the churned-up wakes of brutal propellers, robbed of the enslaving charm of its vastness, stripped of its beauty, of its mystery and of its promise.

An Outcast of the Islands.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE night was getting on to what I may call its deepest hour, the hour most favourable to evil purposes of men's hate, despair or greed—to whatever can whisper into their ears the unlawful counsels of protest against things that are ; the hour of ill-omened silence and chill and stagnation ; the hour when the criminal plies his trade and the victim of sleeplessness reaches the lowest depth of dreadful discouragement ; the hour before the first sight of dawn.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

THE stars burned steadily over the inclined mastheads. Trails of light lay on the water, broke before the advancing hull, and, after she had passed, trembled for a long time as if in awe of the murmuring sea.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

MIND, these were men without the drilled-in habit of obedience. To an onlooker they would be a lot of profane scallywags without a redeeming point. What made them do it—what made them obey me when I, thinking consciously how fine it was, made them drop the bunt of the fore-sail twice to try to do it better? What? They had no professional reputation—no examples, no praise. It wasn't a sense of duty; they all knew well enough how to shirk, and laze, and dodge—when they had a mind to it—and mostly they had. Was it the two pounds ten a month that sent them there? They didn't think their pay half good enough. No; it was something in

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them, something inborn and subtle and everlasting. I don't say positively that the crew of a French or German merchantman wouldn't have done it, but I doubt whether it would have been done in the same way. There was a completeness in it, something solid like a principle, and masterful like an instinct—a disclosure of something secret—of that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes racial difference, that shapes the fate of nations.

Youth.

FROM CONRAD

A PLAINTIVE murmur rose in the night ; a murmur saddening and startling, as if the great solitudes of surrounding woods had tried to whisper into his ear the wisdom of their immense and lofty indifference. Sounds hesitating and vague floated in the air round him, shaped themselves slowly into words ; and at last flowed on gently in a murmuring stream of soft and monotonous sentences.

Tales of Unrest. The Lagoon.

HE was tall, well set up, good-looking and healthy ; and his clear pale face had under its commonplace refinement that slight tinge of overbearing brutality which is given by the possession of only partly difficult accomplishments ; by excelling in games, or in the art of making money ; by the easy mastery over animals and over needy men.

Tales of Unrest. The Return.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

AFTER their marriage they busied themselves, with marked success, in enlarging the circle of their acquaintance. Thirty people knew them by sight ; twenty more with smiling demonstrations tolerated their occasional presence within hospitable thresholds ; at least fifty others became aware of their existence. They moved in their enlarged world among perfectly delightful men and women, who feared emotion, enthusiasm, or failure, more than fire, war, or mortal disease ; who tolerated only the commonest formulas of commonest thoughts, and recognised only profitable facts. It was an extremely charming sphere, the abode of all the virtues, where nothing is realised and where all joys and sorrows are cautiously toned down into pleasures and annoyances . . . that serene region, where noble sentiments are cultivated in sufficient profusion to conceal the pitiless materialism of thoughts and aspirations.

Tales of Unrest. The Return.

FROM CONRAD

ONE aspect of conventions which people who declaim against them lose sight of is that conventions make both joy and suffering easier to bear in a becoming manner.

Chance.

It's extraordinary how we go through life with eyes half shut, with dull ears, with dormant thoughts. Perhaps it's just as well; and it may be that it is this very dullness that makes life to the incalculable majority so supportable and so welcome. Nevertheless, there can be but few of us who had never known one of these rare moments of awakening, when we see, hear, understand ever so much—everything—in a flash, before we fall back again into our agreeable somnolence.

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

It is respectable to have no illusions—and safe—and profitable—and dull. Yet you too in your time must have known the intensity of life, that light of glamour created in the shock of trifles, as amazing as the glow of sparks struck from a cold stone—and as short-lived, alas !

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

SURELY in no other craft as in that of the sea do the hearts of those already launched to sink or swim go out so much to the youth on the brink, looking with shining eyes upon that glitter of the vast surface which is only a reflection of his own glances full of fire. There is such magnificent vagueness in the expectations that had driven each of us to sea, such a glorious indefiniteness, such a beautiful greed of adventures that are their own and only reward ! What we get—well, we won't talk of that ; but can one of us restrain a smile ? In no other kind of life is the illusion more wide of reality—in no other is the beginning *all* illusion—the disenchantment more swift—the subjugation more complete. Hadn't we all commenced with the same desire, ended with the same knowledge, carried the memory of the same cherished glamour through the sordid days of imprecation ? What wonder that when some heavy prod gets home the bond is found to be close ; that besides the fellowship of the craft there is felt the strength of a wider feeling—the feeling that binds a man to a child.

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE ship had found out the momentary weakness of her man. Of all the living creatures upon land and sea, it is ships alone that cannot be taken in by barren pretences, that will not put up with bad art from their masters.

The Mirror of the Sea.

A SHIP is not a slave. You must make her easy in a seaway, you must never forget that you owe her the fullest share of your thought, of your skill, of your self-love. If you remember that obligation, naturally and without effort, as if it were an instinctive feeling of your inner life, she will sail, stay, run for you as long as she is able, or, like a sea-bird going to rest upon the angry waves, she will lay out the heaviest gale that ever made you doubt living long enough to see another sunrise.

The Mirror of the Sea.

FROM CONRAD

“LET go!” This is the final word of a ship’s ended journey, the closing word of her toil and of her achievement. In a life whose worth is told out in passages from port to port, the splash of the anchor’s fall and the thunderous rumbling of the chain are like the closing of a distinct period, of which she seems conscious with a slight deep shudder of all her frame. By so much is she nearer to her appointed death, for neither years nor voyages can go on for ever. It is to her like the striking of a clock, and in the pause which follows she seems to take count of the passing time.

The Mirror of the Sea.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

NOBODY ever comes back from a "missing" ship to tell how hard was the death of the craft, and how sudden and overwhelming the last anguish of her men. Nobody can say with what thoughts, with what regrets, with what words on their lips they died. But there is something fine in the sudden passing away of these hearts from the extremity of struggle and stress and tremendous uproar—from the vast, unrestful rage of the surface to the profound peace of the depths, sleeping untroubled since the beginning of ages.

The Mirror of the Sea.

FROM CONRAD

I COULD imagine no worse eternal punishment for evil seamen who die unrepentant upon the earthly sea than that their souls should be condemned to man the ghosts of disabled ships, drifting for ever across a ghostly and tempestuous ocean.

The Mirror of the Sea.

HE was fundamentally and outwardly abject, as other men are markedly of a generous, distinguished, or venerable appearance. It was the element of his nature which permeated all his acts and passions and emotions ; he raged abjectly, smiled abjectly, was abjectly sad ; his civilities and his indignations were alike abject. I am sure his love would have been the most abject of sentiments—but can one imagine a loathsome insect in love ?

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

NOTHING more awful to watch than a man who has been found out, not in a crime but in a more than criminal weakness. The commonest sort of fortitude prevents us from becoming criminals in a legal sense; it is from weakness unknown, but perhaps suspected, as in some parts of the world you suspect a deadly snake in every bush—from weakness that may lie hidden, watched or unwatched, prayed against or manfully scorned, repressed or maybe ignored more than half a lifetime, not one of us is safe. We are snared into doing things for which we get called names, and things for which we get hanged, and yet the spirit may well survive—survive the condemnation, survive the halter, by Jove! And there are things—they look small enough sometimes too—by which some of us are totally and completely undone.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

DIDN'T I tell you he confessed himself before me as though I had the power to bind and to loose? He burrowed deep, deep, in the hope of my absolution, which would have been of no good to him. This was one of those cases which no solemn deception can palliate, where no man can help; where his very Maker seems to abandon a sinner to his own devices.

Lord Jim.

ACTION is consolatory. It is the enemy of thought and the friend of flattering illusions. Only in the conduct of our action can we find the sense of mastery over the Fates.

Nostramo.

To be busy with material affairs is the best preservative against reflection, fears, doubts—all these things which stand in the way of achievement. I suppose a fellow proposing to cut his throat would experience a sort of relief while occupied in stropping his razor carefully.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

ANARCHISTS, I suppose, have no families—not, at any rate, as we understand that social relation. Organization into families may answer to a need of human nature, but in the last instance it is based on law, and therefore must be something odious and impossible to an anarchist. But, indeed, I don't understand anarchists. Does a man of that—of that—persuasion still remain an anarchist when alone, quite alone and going to bed, for instance? Does he lay his head upon the pillow, pull his bedclothes over him, and go to sleep with the necessity of the *cham bardement général*, as the French slang has it, of the general blow-up, always present to his mind? And if so, how can he? I am sure that if such a faith (or such a fanaticism) once mastered my thoughts I would never be able to compose myself sufficiently to sleep or eat or perform any of the routine acts of daily life.

A Set of Six. The Informer.

FROM CONRAD

IN the pain of that thought was born his conscience ; not that fear of remorse which grows slowly, and slowly decays amongst the complicated facts of life, but a Divine wisdom springing full-grown, armed and severe out of a tried heart, to combat the secret baseness of motives. It came to him in a flash that morality is not a method of happiness. The revelation was terrible. He saw at once that nothing of what he knew mattered in the least. The acts of men and women, success, humiliation, dignity, failure—nothing mattered. It was not a question of more or less pain, of this joy, of that sorrow. It was a question of truth or falsehood—it was a question of life or death.

Tales of Unrest. The Return.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THERE'S nothing more subservient than an arrogant man when his arrogance has once been broken in some particular instance.

Chance.

WE pass through periods dominated by this or that word—it may be development, or it may be competition, or education, or purity, or efficiency, or even sanctity. It is the word of the time. Well, just then it was the word Thrift which was out in the streets walking arm in arm with righteousness, the inseparable companion and backer up of all such national catchwords, looking everybody in the eye as it were.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

WE wander in our thousands over the face of the earth, the illustrious and the obscure, earning beyond the seas our fame, our money, or only a crust of bread ; but it seems to me that for each of us going home must be like going to render an account. We return to face our superiors, our kindred, our friends—those whom we obey, and those whom we love ; but even they who have neither, the most free, lonely, irresponsible and bereft of ties—even those for whom home holds no dear face, no familiar voice—even they have to meet the spirit that dwells within the land, under its sky, in its air, in its valleys, and on its rises, in its fields, in its waters and its trees—a mute friend, judge, and inspirer. Say what you like, to get its joy, to breathe its peace, to face its truth, one must return with a clear conscience.

* * *

But the fact remains that you must touch your reward with clean hands, lest it turn to dead leaves, to thorns, in your grasp. I think it is the lonely, without a fireside or an affection they may call their own, those who

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

return not to a dwelling, but to the land itself, to meet its disembodied, eternal, and unchangeable spirit—it is those who understand best its severity, its saving power, the grace of its secular right to our fidelity, to our obedience. Yes! few of us understand, but we all feel it though, and I say *all* without exception, because those who do not feel it do not count. Each blade of grass has its spot on earth whence it draws its life, its strength; and so is man rooted to the land from which he draws his faith together with his life.

Lord Jim.

THERE is no credulity so eager and blind as the credulity of covetousness, which, in its universal extent, measures the moral misery and the intellectual destitution of mankind.

Nostromo.

FROM CONRAD

EVERY morning the sun, as if keeping pace in his revolutions with the progress of the pilgrimage, emerged with a silent burst of light exactly at the same distance astern of the ship, caught up with her at noon, pouring the concentrated fire of his rays on the pious purposes of the men, glided past on his descent, and sank mysteriously into the sea evening after evening, preserving the same distance ahead of her advancing bows. The five whites on board lived amidships, isolated from the human cargo. The awnings covered the deck with a white roof from stem to stern, and a faint hum, a low murmur of sad voices, alone revealed the presence of a crowd of people upon the great blaze of the ocean. Such were the days, still, hot, heavy, disappearing one by one into the past, as if falling into an abyss for ever open in the wake of the ship; and the ship, lonely under a wisp of smoke, held on her steadfast way, black and smouldering in a luminous immensity, as if scorched by a flame flicked at her from a heaven without pity.

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

ON the black sky the stars, coming out, gleamed over an inky sea that, speckled with foam, flashed back at them the evanescent and pale light of a dazzling whiteness born from the black turmoil of the waves. Remote in the eternal calm, they glittered hard and cold above the uproar of the earth ; they surrounded the vanquished and tormented ship on all sides : more pitiless than the eyes of a triumphant mob, and as unapproachable as the hearts of men.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

FROM CONRAD

A BREEZE was coming in fitful puffs. The stars shone paler as if they had retreated into the frozen depths of immense space. After a chill gust of wind there were a few seconds of perfect calm and absolute silence. Then from behind the black and wavy line of the forests a column of golden light shot up into the heavens and spread over the semi-circle of the eastern horizon. The sun had risen. The mist lifted, broke into drifting patches, vanished into thin flying wreaths ; and the unveiled lagoon lay, polished and black, in the heavy shadows at the foot of the wall of trees. A white eagle rose over it with a slanting and ponderous flight, reached the clear sunshine and appeared dazzlingly brilliant for a moment, then soaring higher, became a dark and motionless speck before it vanished into the blue as if it had left the earth for ever.

Tales of Unrest. The Lagoon.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THERE was not a breath of wind on the land or river, but high above, in the transparent sky, little clouds rushed past the moon, now appearing in her dispersed rays with the brilliance of silver, now obscuring her face with the blackness of ebony. Far away, in the middle of the river, a fish would leap now and then with a short splash, the very loudness of which measured the profundity of the overpowering silence that swallowed up the sharp sound suddenly.

An Outcast of the Islands.

HHE held his head up in the glare of the lamp—a head vigorously modelled into deep shadows and shining lights—a head powerful and misshapen with a tormented and flattened face—a face pathetic and brutal: the tragic, the mysterious, the repulsive mask of a nigger's soul.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

FROM CONRAD

SHE listened to me unreadable, unmoved, narrowed eyes, closed lips, flushed face, as if carved six thousand years ago in order to fix for ever that something secret and obscure which is in all women. Not the gross immobility of a Sphinx proposing roadside riddles, but the finer immobility, almost sacred, of a fateful figure seated at the very source of the passions that have moved men from the dawn of ages.

The Arrow of Gold.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

I HOPED for the impossible—for the laying of what is the most obstinate ghost of man's creation, of the uneasy doubt uprising like a mist, secret and gnawing like a worm, and more chilling than the certitude of death—the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct. It is the hardest thing to stumble against ; it is the thing that breeds yelling panics and good little quiet villainies ; it is the true shadow of calamity.

Lord Jim.

It was solemn, and a little ridiculous too, as they always are, those struggles of an individual trying to save from the fire his idea of what his moral identity should be, this precious notion of a convention, only one of the rules of the game, nothing more, but all the same so terribly effective by its assumption of unlimited power over natural instincts, by the awful penalties of its failure.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

THERE are many shades in the danger of adventures and gales, and it is only now and then that there appears on the face of facts a sinister violence of intention—that indefinable something which forces it upon the mind and the heart of a man that this complication of accidents or these elemental furies are coming at him with a purpose of malice, with a strength beyond control, with an unbridled cruelty that means to tear out of him his hope and his fear, the pain of his fatigue and his longing for rest: which means to smash, to destroy, to annihilate all he had seen, known, loved, enjoyed, or hated; all that is priceless and necessary—the sunshine, the memories, the future—which means to sweep the whole precious world utterly away from his sight by the simple and appalling act of taking his life.

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE dead can live only with the exact intensity and quality of the life imparted to them by the living.

Under Western Eyes.

I CAN'T tell if a straw ever saved a drowning man, but I know that a mere glance is enough to make despair pause. For in truth we who are creatures of impulse are not creatures of despair. Suicide, I suspect, is very often the outcome of mere mental weariness—not an act of savage energy, but the final symptom of complete collapse.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

BUT as to me, left alone with the solitary candle, I remained strangely unenlightened. I was no longer young enough to behold at every turn the magnificence that besets our insignificant footsteps in good and in evil. I smiled to think that, after all, it was yet he, of us two, who had the light. And I felt sad. A clean slate, did he say? As if the initial word of each our destiny were not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock.

Lord Jim.

DIFFERENCES in politics, in ethics, and even in æsthetics need not arouse angry antagonism. One's opinion may change; one's tastes may alter—in fact, they do. One's very conception of virtue is at the mercy of some felicitous temptation which may be sprung on one any day. All these things are perpetually on the swing. But a temperamental difference, temperament being immutable, is the parent of hate. That's why religious quarrels are the fiercest of all.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

A SINGLE word had stripped him of his discretion—of that discretion which is more necessary to the decencies of our inner being than clothing is to the decorum of our body.

Lord Jim.

AT such times his thoughts would be full of valorous deeds ; he loved these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements. They were the best parts of life, its secret truth, its hidden reality. They had a gorgeous virility, the charm of vagueness, they passed before him with an heroic tread ; they carried his soul away with them and made it drunk with the divine philtre of an unbounded confidence in itself.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

THERE are in our lives short periods which hold no place in memory, but only as the recollection of a feeling. There is no remembrance of gesture, of action, of any outward manifestation of life ; those are lost in the unearthly brilliance or in the unearthly gloom of such moments. We are absorbed in the contemplation of that something, within our bodies, which rejoices or suffers while the body goes on breathing, instinctively runs away, or, not less instinctively, fights—perhaps dies. But death in such a moment is the privilege of the fortunate, it is a high and rare favour, a supreme grace.

An Outcast of the Islands.

IN the most sceptical heart there lurks at such moments, when the chances of existence are involved, a desire to leave a correct impression of the feelings, like a light by which the action may be seen when personality is gone, gone where no light of investigation can ever reach the truth which every death takes out of the world.

Nostramo.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

ON clear evenings the silent ship, under the cold sheen of the dead moon, took on the false aspect of passionless repose resembling the winter of the earth. Under her a long band of gold barred the black disc of the sea. Footsteps echoed on her quiet decks. The moonlight clung to her like a frosted mist, and the white sails stood out in dazzling cones as of stainless snow. In the magnificence of the phantom rays the ship appeared pure like a vision of ideal beauty, illusive like a tender dream of serene peace. And nothing in her was real, nothing was distinct and solid but the heavy shadows that filled her decks with their unceasing and noiseless stir; the shadows, blacker than the night, and more restless than the thoughts of men.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

FROM CONRAD

A DRAUGHT of air, fanned from forward by the speed of the ship, passed steadily through the long gloom between the high bulwarks, swept over the rows of prone bodies ; a few dim flames in globe-lamps were hung short here and there under the ridge-poles, and in the blurred circles of light thrown down and trembling slightly to the unceasing vibration of the ship, appeared a chin upturned, two closed eyelids, a dark hand with silver rings, a meagre limb draped in a torn covering, a head bent back, a naked foot, a throat bared and stretched as if offering itself to the knife. The well-to-do had made for their families shelters with heavy boxes and dusty mats ; the poor reposed side by side with all they had on earth tied up in a rag under their heads ; the lone old men slept, with drawn-up legs, upon their prayer-carpets, with their hands over their ears and one elbow on each side of the face ; a father, his shoulders up and his knees under his forehead, dozed dejectedly by a boy who slept on his back, with tousled hair and one arm commandingly extended ;

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

a woman, covered from head to foot, like a corpse, with a piece of white sheeting, had a naked child in the hollow of each arm ; the Arabs' belongings, piled right aft, made a heavy mound of broken outlines, with a cargo-lamp swung above, and a great confusion of vague forms behind : gleams of paunchy brass pots, the foot-rest of a deck-chair, blades of spears, the straight scabbard of an old sword leaning against a heap of pillows, the spout of a tin coffee-pot.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

A SIGH under the flaming blue, a shiver of the sleeping sea, a cool breath as if a door had been swung upon the frozen spaces of the universe, and with a stir of leaves, with the nod of boughs, with the tremble of slender branches, the sea breeze struck the coast, rushed up the river, swept round the broad reaches, and travelled on in a soft ripple of darkening water, in the whisper of branches, in the rustle of leaves of the awakened forests. It fanned in Lakamba's campong the dull red of expiring embers into a pale brilliance ; and, under its touch, the slender, upright spirals of smoke that rose from every glowing heap swayed, wavered, and eddying down filled the twilight of clustered shade trees with the aromatic scent of the burning wood.

An Outcast of the Islands.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

AROUND the short stillness of the open place the trees rustled faintly, the soft laughter of girls playing with the flowers rose in clear bursts of joyous sound. At the end of upright spear-shafts the long tufts of dyed horse-hair waved crimson and filmy in the gust of wind ; and beyond the blaze of hedges the brook of limpid quick water ran invisible and loud under the drooping grass of the bank, with a great murmur, passionate and gentle.

Tales of Unrest. Karain : a Memory.

FROM CONRAD

HE was one of the most trustworthy men I had ever known. The gentle light of a simple, unwearied, as it were, and intelligent good-nature illumined his long hairless face. It had deep downward folds, and was pale as of a man who had always led a sedentary life—which was indeed very far from being the case. His hair was thin, and brushed back from a massive and lofty forehead. One fancied that at twenty he must have looked very much like what he was now at three score. It was a student's face; only the eyebrows nearly all white, thick and bushy, together with the resolute, searching glance that came from under them, were not in accord with his, I may say, learned appearance. He was tall and loose-jointed; his slight stoop, together with an innocent smile, made him appear benevolently ready to lend you his ear; his long arms with pale, big hands had rare deliberate gestures of a pointing-out, demonstrating kind.

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

EVERY pretty smile was succeeded swiftly by a look of silent, repressed anxiety, as if put to flight by the recollection of some abiding danger. At times she would sit down with us, and, with her soft cheek dimpled by the knuckles of her little hand, she would listen to our talk ; her big clear eyes would remain fastened on our lips, as though each pronounced word had a visible shape. Her mother had taught her to read and write ; she had learned a good bit of English from Jim, and she spoke it most amusingly, with his own clipping, boyish intonation. Her tenderness hovered over him like a flutter of wings. She lived so completely in his contemplation that she had acquired something of his outward aspect, something that recalled him in her movements, in the way she stretched her arm, turned her head, directed her glances. Her vigilant affection had an intensity that made it almost perceptible to the senses ; it seemed actually to exist in the ambient matter of space, to dwell in the sunshine like a tremulous, subdued, and impassioned note. *Lord Jim.*

FROM CONRAD

No man succeeds in everything he undertakes. In that sense we are all failures. The great point is not to fail in ordering and sustaining the effort of our life. In this matter vanity is what leads us astray. It hurries us into situations from which we must come out damaged ; whereas pride is our safeguard, by the reserve it imposes on the choice of our endeavour as much as by the virtue of its sustaining power.

A Set of Six. The Duel.

THE truth seems to be that it is impossible to lay the ghost of a fact. You can face it or shirk it—and I have come across a man or two who could wink at their familiar shades.

Lord Jim.

THERE can be no life without faith and love—faith in a human heart, love of a human being !

Tales of Unrest. The Return.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

WHILE there's life there is hope, truly ; but there is fear too.

Lord Jim.

NOTHING easier than to say, Have no fear ! Nothing more difficult. How does one kill fear, I wonder ? How do you shoot a spectre through the heart, slash off its spectral head, take it by its spectral throat ? It is an enterprise you rush into while you dream, and are glad to make your escape with wet hair and every limb shaking. The bullet is not run, the blade not forged, the man not born ; even the winged words of truth drop at your feet like lumps of lead. You require for such a desperate encounter an enchanted and poisoned shaft dipped in a lie too subtle to be found on earth. An enterprise for a dream, my masters !

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

FEAR always remains. A man may destroy everything within himself, love and hate and belief, and even doubt ; but as long as he clings to life he cannot destroy fear : the fear, subtle, indestructible, and terrible, that pervades his being ; that tinges his thoughts ; that lurks in his heart ; that watches on his lips the struggle of his last breath.

Tales of Unrest. An Outpost of Progress.

WE all seem a little mad to each other ; an excellent arrangement for the bulk of humanity which finds in it an easy motive of forgiveness.

Chance.

EXPLAIN it as you may, in this world the friendless, like the poor, are always a little suspect, as if honesty and delicacy were only possible to the privileged few.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THERE are those who say that a native will not speak to a white man. Error. No man will speak to his master ; but to a wanderer and a friend, to him who does not come to teach or to rule, to him who asks for nothing and accepts all things, words are spoken by the camp-fires, in the shared solitude of the sea, in riverside villages, in resting-places surrounded by forests—words are spoken that take no account of race or colour. One heart speaks—another one listens ; and the earth, the sea, the sky, the passing wind and the stirring leaf, hear also the futile tale of the burden of life.

Tales of Unrest. Karain : a Memory.

FROM CONRAD

THE wisdom of the heart, having no concern with the erection or demolition of theories any more than with the defence of prejudices, has no random words at its command. The words it pronounces have the value of acts of integrity, tolerance, and compassion. A woman's true tenderness, like the true virility of man, is expressed in action of a conquering kind.

Nostramo.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE thin gold shaving of the moon floating slowly downwards had lost itself on the darkened surface of the waters, and the eternity beyond the sky seemed to come down nearer to the earth, with the augmented glitter of the stars, with the more profound sombreness in the lustre of the half-transparent dome covering the flat disc of an opaque sea.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

THUNDER squalls hung on the horizon, circled round the ship, far off and growling angrily, like a troop of wild beasts afraid to charge home. The invisible sun, sweeping above the upright masts, made on the clouds a blurred stain of rayless light, and a similar patch of faded radiance kept pace with it from east to west over the unglittering level of the waters. At night, through the impenetrable darkness of earth and heaven, broad sheets of flame waved noiselessly ; and for half a second the becalmed craft stood out with its masts and rigging, with every sail and every rope distinct and black in the centre of a fiery outburst, like a charred ship enclosed in a globe of fire. And, again, for long hours she remained lost in a vast universe of night and silence, where gentle sighs, wandering here and there like forlorn souls, made the still sails flutter as in sudden fear, and the ripple of a beshrouded ocean whisper its compassion afar—in a voice mournful, immense and faint.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE white man came out of the hut in time to see the enormous conflagration of sunset put out by the swift and stealthy shadows that, rising like a black and impalpable vapour above the tree-tops, spread over the heaven, extinguishing the crimson glow of floating clouds and the red brilliance of departing daylight. In a few moments all the stars came out above the intense blackness of the earth, and the great lagoon gleaming suddenly with reflected lights resembled an oval patch of night sky flung down into the hopeless and abysmal night of the wilderness.

Tales of Unrest. The Lagoon.

FROM CONRAD

THE river was dark now, and the schooner lay on it, a black, a lonely, and a graceful form, with the slender masts darting upwards from it in two frail and raking lines. The shadows of the evening crept up the trees, crept up from bough to bough, till at last the long sunbeams coursing from the western horizon skimmed lightly over the topmost branches, then flew upwards among the piled-up clouds, giving them a sombre and fiery aspect in the last flush of light. And suddenly the light disappeared as if lost in the immensity of the great, blue and empty hollow overhead. The sun had set, and the forests became a straight wall of formless blackness. Above them, on the edge of lingering clouds, a single star glimmered fitfully, obscured now and then by the rapid flight of high and invisible vapours.

An Outcast of the Islands.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

HE was the man that cannot steer, that cannot splice, that dodges the work on dark nights ; that, aloft, holds on frantically with both arms and legs, and swears at the wind, the sleet, the darkness ; the man who curses the sea while others work. The man who is the last out and the first in when all hands are called. The man who can't do most things and won't do the rest. The pet of philanthropists and self-seeking land-lubbers. The sympathetic and deserving creature that knows all about his rights, but knows nothing of courage, of endurance, and of the unexpressed faith, of the unspoken loyalty that knits together a ship's company. The independent offspring of the ignoble freedom of the slums, full of disdain and hate for the austere servitude of the sea.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

FROM CONRAD

THEN she smiled. In the sombre beauty of her face that smile was like a gleam of dawn on a stormy morning ; like the first ray of Eastern light that darts evanescent and pale through the gloomy clouds : the fore-runner of sunrise and of thunder.

An Outcast of the Islands.

THE conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it ; not a sentimental pretence but an idea ; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to.

Youth. Heart of Darkness.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

HANG ideas ! They are tramps, vagabonds, knocking at the back-door of your mind, each taking a little of your substance, each carrying away some crumb of that belief in a few simple notions you must cling to if you want to live decently and would like to die easy !

Lord Jim.

THE whisper of his conviction seemed to open before me a vast and uncertain expanse, as of a crepuscular horizon on a plain at dawn—or was it, perchance, at the coming of the night ? One had not the courage to decide ; but it was a charming and deceptive light, throwing the impalpable poesy of its dimness over pitfalls—over graves. His life had begun in sacrifice, in enthusiasm for generous ideas ; he had travelled very far, on various ways, on strange paths, and whatever he followed it had been without faltering, and therefore without shame and without regret.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

KARAIN stared stonily; and looking at his rigid figure, I thought of his wanderings, of that obscure Odyssey of revenge, of all the men that wander amongst illusions; of the illusions as restless as men; of the illusions faithful, faithless; of the illusions that give joy, that give sorrow, that give pain, that give peace; of the invincible illusions that can make life and death appear serene, inspiring, tormented or ignoble.

Tales of Unrest. Karain: a Memory.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE way of even the most justifiable revolution is prepared by personal impulses disguised into creeds.

The Secret Agent.

ONLY in men's imagination does every truth find an effective and undeniable existence. Imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art as of life. An imaginative and exact rendering of authentic memories may serve worthily that spirit of piety towards all things human, which sanctions the conceptions of a writer of tales, and the emotions of the man reviewing his own experience.

Some Reminiscences.

AN ideal is often but a flaming vision of reality.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

THERE is something peculiar in a small boat upon the wide sea. Over the lives borne from under the shadow of death there seems to fall the shadow of madness. When your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you ; the world that made you, restrained you, took care of you. It is as if the souls of men floating on an abyss and in touch with immensity had been set free for any excess of heroism, absurdity or abomination.

Lord Jim.

TRUST a boat on the high seas to bring out the Irrational that lurks at the bottom of every thought, sentiment, sensation, emotion.

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

Good intentions stand in their own way so much. Whereas if you want to do harm to any one you needn't hesitate. You have only to go on. No one will reproach you with your mistakes, or call you a confounded, clumsy meddler.

Chance.

It is very difficult to be wholly joyous or wholly sad on this earth. The comic, when it is human, soon takes upon itself a face of pain ; and some of our griefs (some, not all, for it is the capacity for suffering which makes man august in the eyes of men) have their source in weaknesses which must be recognized with smiling compassion as the common inheritance of us all. Joy and sorrow in this world pass into each other, mingling their forms and their murmurs in the twilight of life as mysterious as an overshadowed ocean, while the dazzling brightness of supreme hopes lies far off, fascinating and still, on the distant edge of the horizon.

A Familiar Preface to Some Reminiscences.

FROM CONRAD

HIS chaff would have been harmless enough if intimacy of intercourse in the absence of all friendly feeling were not a thing detestable in itself.

A Set of Six. An Anarchist.

THERE is a kind way of assisting our fellow-creatures which is enough to break their hearts while it saves their outer envelope.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE night was clear, with a gentle breeze. The ship heeled over a little, slipping quietly over a sombre sea towards the inaccessible and festal splendour of a black horizon pierced by points of flickering fire. Above the mastheads the resplendent curve of the Milky Way spanned the sky like a triumphal arch of eternal light, thrown over the dark pathway of the earth.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

FROM CONRAD

FROM time to time he felt on his face the passing, warm touch of an immense breath, coming from beyond the forest, like the short panting of an oppressed world. Then the heavy air round him, the air full of heat, odorous and sickly, was pierced by a sharp gust of wind, bringing with it the fresh, damp feel of the falling rain; and all the innumerable tree-tops of the forest before his eyes swayed to the left and sprang back again in a tumultuous balancing of nodding branches and shuddering leaves. A light frown ran over the river, the clouds stirred slowly, changing their aspect but not their place, as if they had turned ponderously over; and when the sudden movement had died out in a quickened tremor of the slenderest twigs, there was a short period of formidable immobility above and below, during which the voice of the thunder was heard, speaking in a sustained, emphatic and vibrating roll, with violent louder outbursts of crashing sound, like a wrathful and threatening discourse of an angry god.

An Outcast of the Islands.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE great luminous sky, never softened, never veiled, and flooding the earth with the everlasting sunshine of the tropics—that sunshine which, in its unbroken splendour, oppresses the soul with an inexpressible melancholy more intimate, more penetrating, more profound than the grey sadness of the northern mists.

'Twiixt Land and Sea. Freya of the Seven Isles.

THE moon had spread over everything a thin layer of silver—over the rank grass, over the mud, upon the wall of vegetation standing higher than the wall of a temple, over the great river I could see through a sombre gap glittering, glittering, as it flowed broadly by without a murmur.

Youth. Heart of Darkness.

FROM CONRAD

HIS own boat was there anchored by a stone, and he stepped into it, keeping his hand on the gunwale of Nina's canoe. In a moment the two little nutshells, with their occupants, floated quietly side by side, reflected by the black water in the dim light struggling through a high canopy of dense foliage; while above, away up in the broad day, flamed immense red blossoms sending down on their heads a shower of great dew-sparkling petals that descended, rotating slowly, in a continuous and perfumed stream; and over them, under them, in the sleeping water; all around them in a ring of luxuriant vegetation, bathed in the warm air charged with strong and harsh perfumes, the intense work of tropical nature went on: plants shooting upward, entwined, interlaced in inextricable confusion, climbing madly and brutally over each other in the terrible silence of a desperate struggle towards the life-giving sunshine above—as if struck with sudden horror at the seething mass of corruption below, at the death and decay from which they sprang.

Almayer's Folly.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

I LOVED to watch her slow changes of pose, to look at her long immobilities composed in the graceful lines of her body, to observe the mysterious stare of her splendid black eyes, somewhat long in shape, half closed, contemplating the void. She was like a spell-bound creature with the forehead of a goddess crowned by the dishevelled magnificent hair of a gipsy tramp. Even her indifference was seductive.

'Twixt Land and Sea. A Smile of Fortune.

FROM CONRAD

You know I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies—which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world—what I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick, as biting something rotten would do.

* * *

No relation of a dream can convey that dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams. . . .

No, it is impossible ; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes its truth, its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream—alone.

Youth. Heart of Darkness.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

WHO knows what true loneliness is—not the conventional word, but the naked terror? To the lonely themselves it wears a mask. The most miserable outcast hugs some memory or some illusion. Now and then a fatal conjunction of events may lift the veil for an instant. For an instant only. No human being could bear a steady view of moral solitude without going mad.

Under Western Eyes.

It is when we try to grapple with another man's infinite need that we perceive how incomprehensible, wavering, and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun. It is as if loneliness were a hard and absolute condition of existence; the envelope of flesh and blood on which our eyes are fixed melts before the outstretched hand, and there remains only the capricious, unconsolable, and elusive spirit that no eye can follow, no hand can grasp.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

LOVE, though in a sense it may be admitted to be stronger than death, is by no means so universal and so sure. In fact, love is rare—the love of men, of things, of ideas, the love of perfected skill. For love is the enemy of haste ; it takes count of passing days, of men who pass away, of a fine art matured slowly in the course of years and doomed in a short time to pass away too, and be no more. Love and regret go hand in hand in this world of changes swifter than the shifting of the clouds reflected in the mirror of the sea.

The Mirror of the Sea.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

HE stood in the revealing night—in the darkness that tries the hearts, in the night useless for the work of men, but in which their gaze, undazzled by the sunshine of covetous days, wanders sometimes as far as the stars.

Tales of Unrest. The Return.

IT was a great peace, as if the earth had been one grave, and for a time I stood there thinking of the living who, buried in remote places out of the knowledge of mankind, still are fated to share in its tragic or grotesque miseries. In its noble struggles too—who knows? The human heart is vast enough to contain all the world. It is valiant enough to bear the burden, but where is the courage that would cast it off?

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

PROVERBS are art—cheap art. As a general rule they are not true ; unless indeed they happen to be mere platitudes, as for instance the proverb, “ Half a loaf is better than no bread,” or “ A miss is as good as a mile.” Some proverbs are simply imbecile, others are immoral. The one evolved out of the naïve heart of the great Russian people, “ Man discharges the piece, but God carries the bullet,” is piously atrocious, and at bitter variance with the accepted conception of a compassionate God. It would indeed be an inconsistent occupation for the Guardian of the poor, the innocent and the helpless, to carry the bullet, for instance, into the heart of a father.

A Set of Six. Gaspar Ruiz.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE ship moved so smoothly that her onward motion was imperceptible to the senses of men, as though she had been a crowded planet speeding through the dark spaces of ether behind the swarm of suns, in the appalling and calm solitudes awaiting the breath of future creations.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

IT was one of those nights that give the impression of extreme vastness, when the sky seems higher, when the passing puffs of tepid breeze seem to bring with them faint whispers from beyond the stars. The air was full of sweet scent, of the scent charming, penetrating and violent, like the impulse of love. He looked into that great dark place, odorous with the breath of life, with the mystery of existence, renewed, fecund, indestructible ; and he felt afraid of his solitude, of the solitude of his body, of the loneliness of his soul in the presence of this unconscious and ardent struggle ; of this lofty indifference ; of this merciless and mysterious purpose, perpetuating strife and death through the march of ages.

An Outcast of the Islands.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE sky low by the horizon took on the delicate tints of pink and yellow like the inside of a rare shell. And higher, where it glowed with a pearly sheen, a small black cloud appeared, like a forgotten fragment of the night set in a border of dazzling gold. The beams of light skipped on the crests of the waves.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

FROM CONRAD

OVER the lagoon a mist drifting and low had crept, erasing slowly the glittering images of the stars. And now a great expanse of white vapour covered the land : it flowed cold and grey in the darkness, eddied in noiseless whirls round the tree-trunks and about the platform of the house, which seemed to float upon a restless and impalpable illusion of a sea. Only far away the tops of the trees stood outlined on the twinkle of heaven, like a sombre and forbidding shore—a coast deceptive, pitiless and black.

Tales of Unrest. The Lagoon.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

WE looked into the box.

There were there a couple of reels of cotton, a packet of needles, a bit of silk ribbon, dark blue ; a cabinet photograph, at which Hollis stole a glance before laying it on the table face downwards. A girl's portrait, I could see. There were, amongst a lot of various small objects, a bunch of flowers, a narrow white glove with many buttons, a slim packet of letters carefully tied up. Amulets of white men ! Charms and talismans ! Charms that keep them straight, that drive them crooked, that have the power to make a young man sigh, an old man smile. Potent things that procure dreams of joy, thoughts of regret ; that soften hard hearts, and can temper a soft one to the hardness of steel. Gifts of heaven—things of earth. . . .

Tales of Unrest. Karain : a Memory.

FROM CONRAD

A MULTITUDE of stars coming out into the clear night peopled the emptiness of the sky. They glittered, as if alive, above the ship on all sides; they surrounded the living ship on all sides; more intense than the eyes of a staring crowd, and as inscrutable as the souls of men.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

ARE not our lives too short for that full utterance which through all our stammerings is, of course, our only and abiding intention? I have given up expecting those last words whose ring, if they could only be pronounced, would shake both heaven and earth. There is never time to say our last word—the last word of our love, of our desire, faith, remorse, submission, revolt.

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

I DIDN'T know what he was playing up to—if he was playing up to anything at all—and I expect he did not know either ; for it is my belief no man ever understands quite his own artful dodges to escape from the grim shadow of self-knowledge.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

SIXTY is not a bad age—unless in perspective, when no doubt it is contemplated by the majority of us with mixed feelings. It is a calm age; the game is practically over by then; and standing aside one begins to remember with a certain vividness what a fine fellow one used to be. I have observed that, by an amiable attention of Providence, most people at sixty begin to take a romantic view of themselves. Their very failures exhale a charm of peculiar potency. And indeed the hopes of the future are a fine company to live with, exquisite forms, fascinating if you like, but—so to speak—naked, stripped for a run. The robes of glamour are luckily the property of the immovable past which, without them, would sit, a shivery sort of thing, under the gathering shadows.

*Within the Tides. The Inn of the Two
Witches.*

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THERE are none so ignorant as not to know suffering, none so simple as not to feel and suffer from the shock of warring impulses. The ignorant must feel and suffer from their complexity as well as the wisest ; but to them the pain of struggle and defeat appears strange, mysterious, remediable and unjust.

An Outcast of the Islands.

YOUR journalist, whether he takes charge of a ship or a fleet, almost invariably "casts" his anchor. Now, an anchor is never cast, and to take a liberty with technical language is a crime against the clearness, precision, and beauty of perfected speech.

The Mirror of the Sea.

FROM CONRAD

A TRANSGRESSION, a crime, entering a man's existence, eats it up like a malignant growth, consumes it like a fever.

Nostramo.

IT'S true that nothing lays itself open to the charge of exaggeration more than the language of naked truth. What comes with a shock is admitted with difficulty.

Chance.

BUT from that same provision of understanding, there springs in us compassion, charity, indignation, the sense of solidarity ; and in minds of any largeness an inclination to that indulgence which is next door to affection.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

HE, on his side, had that faculty of beholding at a hint the face of his desire and the shape of his dream, without which the earth would know no lover and no adventurer.

Lord Jim.

IT is to be remarked that a good many people are born curiously unfitted for the fate waiting them on this earth.

Chance.

TO us the limits of the universe are strictly defined by those we know. There is nothing for us outside the babble of praise or blame on familiar lips, and beyond our last acquaintance there lies only a vast chaos.

An Outcast of the Islands.

FROM CONRAD

AN untimely joke is a source of bitter regret always. Sometimes it may ruin a man ; not because it is a joke, but because it is untimely.

Chance.

THERE was no wind. Not a leaf below him stirred, and even the sea was but a still, uncomplaining shadow. Far away on the unclouded sky the pale lightning, the heat-lightning of the tropics, played tremulously amongst the low stars in short, faint, mysterious, consecutive flashes, like incomprehensible signals from some distant planet.

'Twi'xt Land and Sea. Freya of the Seven Isles.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE ship began to dip into a south-west swell, and the softly luminous sky of low latitudes took on a harder sheen from day to day above our heads: it arched high above the ship vibrating and pale, like an immense dome of steel, resonant with the deep voice of freshening gales. The sunshine gleamed cold on the white curls of black waves. Before the strong breath of westerly squalls the ship, with reduced sail, lay slowly over, obstinate and yielding. She drove to and fro in the unceasing endeavour to fight her way through the invisible violence of the winds: she pitched headlong into dark smooth hollows; she struggled upwards over the snowy ridges of great running seas; she rolled, restless, from side to side, like a thing in pain. Enduring and valiant, she answered to the call of men; and her slim spars, waving for ever in abrupt semi-circles, seemed to beckon in vain for help towards the stormy sky.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

FROM CONRAD

A MURMUR powerful and gentle, a murmur vast and faint; the murmur of trembling leaves, of stirring boughs, ran through the tangled depths of the forests, ran over the starrysmoothness of the lagoon, and the water between the piles lapped the slimy timber once with a sudden splash. A breath of warm air touched the two men's faces and passed on with a mournful sound—a breath loud and short like an uneasy sigh of the dreaming earth.

Tales of Unrest. The Lagoon.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

AUTUMN came. The clouded sky descended low upon the black contours of the hills; and the dead leaves danced in spiral whirls under naked trees, till the wind, sighing profoundly, laid them to rest in the hollows of bare valleys. And from morning till night one could see all over the land black denuded boughs, the boughs gnarled and twisted, as if contorted with pain, swaying sadly between the wet clouds and the soaked earth. The clear and gentle streams of summer days rushed discoloured and raging at the stones that barred the way to the sea, with the fury of madness bent upon suicide. From horizon to horizon the great road to the sands lay between the hills in a dull glitter of empty curves, resembling an unnavigable river of mud.

Tales of Unrest. The Idiots.

FROM CONRAD

ABDULLA made a few paces forward and found himself for the last time face to face with his old enemy. Whatever he might have been once he was not dangerous now, lying stiff and lifeless in the tender light of the early day. The only white man on the coast was dead, and his soul, delivered from the trammels of his earthly folly, stood now in the presence of Infinite Wisdom. On the upturned face there was that serene look which follows the sudden relief from anguish and pain, and it testified silently before the cloudless heaven that the man lying there under the gaze of indifferent eyes had been permitted to forget before he died.

Almayer's Folly.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

ABOVE the shapeless darkness of the forest undergrowth rose the tree-tops with their high boughs and leaves standing out black on the pale sky—like fragments of night floating on moonbeams.

An Outcast of the Islands.

VANITY plays lurid tricks with our memory, and the truth of every passion wants some pretence to make it live.

Lord Jim.

A MAN who has had his way is seldom happy, for generally he finds that the way does not lead very far on this earth of desires which can never be fully satisfied.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

A CERTAIN readiness to perish is not so very rare, but it is seldom that you meet men whose souls, steeled in the impenetrable armour of resolution, are ready to fight a losing battle to the last; the desire of peace waxes stronger as hope declines, till at last it conquers the very desire of life. Which of us here has not observed this, or maybe experienced something of that feeling in his own person—this extreme weariness of emotions, the vanity of effort, the yearning for rest? Those striving with unreasonable forces know it well—the shipwrecked castaways in boats, wanderers lost in a desert, men battling against the unthinking might of nature, or the stupid brutality of crowds.

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

WORDS, as is well known, are the great foes of reality.

Under Western Eyes.

WE live at the mercy of a malevolent word. A sound, a mere disturbance of the air, sinks into our very soul sometimes.

Chance.

AND a word carries far—very far—deals destruction through time as the bullets go flying through space.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

IT can't be denied that our wits are much more alert when engaged in wrong-doing (in which one mustn't be found out) than in a righteous occupation.

Chance.

THE popular lore of all nations testifies that duplicity and cunning, together with bodily strength, were looked upon, even more than courage, as heroic virtues by primitive mankind. To overcome your adversary was the great affair of life. Courage was taken for granted. But the use of intelligence awakened wonder and respect. Stratagems, providing they did not fail, were honourable; the easy massacre of an unsuspecting enemy evoked no feelings but those of gladness, pride, and admiration. Not perhaps that primitive men were more faithless than their descendants of to-day, but that they went straighter to their aim, and were more artless in their recognition of success as the only standard of morality.

Nostramo.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

I REMEMBER my youth and the feeling that will never come back any more—the feeling that I could last for ever, outlast the sea, the earth, and all men ; the deceitful feeling that lures us on to joys, to perils, to love, to vain effort—to death ; the triumphant conviction of strength, the heat of life in the handful of dust, the glow in the heart that with every year grows dim, grows cold, grows small, and expires—and expires, too soon, too soon—before life itself.

Youth.

FROM CONRAD

ONE comes out of prison in the same clothes one wore on the day of condemnation, no matter how long one has been put away there. Oh, they last ! They last ! But there is something which is preserved by prison life even better than one's discarded clothing. It is the force, the vividness of one's sentiments. A monastery will do that too ; but in the unholy claustration of a jail you are thrown back wholly upon yourself—for God and Faith are not there. The people outside disperse their affections ; you hoard yours, you nurse them into intensity. What they let slip, what they forget in the movement and changes of free life, you hold on to, amplify, exaggerate into a rank growth of memories. They can look with a smile at the troubles and pains of the past ; but you can't. Old pains keep on gnawing at your heart, old desires, old deceptions, old dreams, assailing you in the dead stillness of your present where nothing moves but the irrevocable minutes of your life.

Chance.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THERE are times when a man must act as though life were equally sweet in any company. I've known such a time, and, what's more, I shan't now pretend to pull a long face over my necessity, because a good many of that bad company from want of moral—moral—what shall I say?—posture, or from some other equally profound cause, were twice as instructive and twenty times more amusing than the usual respectable thief of commerce you fellows ask to sit at your table without any real necessity—from habit, from cowardice, from good-nature, from a hundred sneaking and inadequate reasons.

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

I HAVE known its fascination since : I have seen the mysterious shores, the still water, the lands of brown nations, where a stealthy Nemesis lies in wait, pursues, overtakes so many of the conquering race, who are proud of their wisdom, of their knowledge, of their strength. But for me all the East is contained in that vision of my youth. It is all in that moment when I opened my young eyes on it. I came upon it from a tussle with the sea—and I was young—and I saw it looking at me. And this is all that is left of it ! Only a moment ; a moment of strength, of romance, of glamour—of youth ! . . . A flick of sunshine upon a strange shore, the time to remember, the time for a sigh, and—good-bye !—Night—Good-bye . . . !

Youth.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

HE had been baffled, repelled, almost frightened by the intensity of that tropical life which wants the sunshine but works in gloom ; which seems to be all grace of colour and form, all brilliance, all smiles, but is only the blossoming of the dead ; whose mystery holds the promise of joy and beauty, yet contains nothing but poison and decay. He had been frightened by the vague perception of danger before, but now, as he looked at that life again, his eyes seemed able to pierce the fantastic veil of creepers and leaves, to look past the solid trunks, to see through the forbidding gloom—and the mystery was disclosed—enchancing, subduing, beautiful.

An Outcast of the Islands.

FROM CONRAD

THE earth is so small that I was afraid of, some day, being waylaid by a blear-eyed, swollen-faced, besmirched loafer, with no soles to his canvas shoes, and with a flutter of rags about the elbows, who, on the strength of old acquaintance, would ask for a loan of five dollars. You know the awful jaunty bearing of these scarecrows coming to you from a decent past, the rasping careless voice, the half-averted impudent glances—those meetings more trying to a man who believes in the solidarity of our lives than the sight of an impenitent death-bed to a priest.

Lord Jim.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

A SILENCE of the sea, of the sky, merged into one indefinite immensity still as death around these saved, palpitating lives. "You might have heard a pin drop in the boat," he said with a queer contraction of his lips, like a man trying to master his sensibilities while relating some extremely moving fact. A silence! God alone, Who had willed him as he was, knows what he made of it in his heart. "I didn't think any spot on earth could be so still," he said. "You couldn't distinguish the sea from the sky; there was nothing to see and nothing to hear. Not a glimmer, not a shape, not a sound. You could have believed that every bit of dry land had gone to the bottom; that every man on earth but I and these beggars in the boat had got drowned." He leaned over the table with his knuckles propped amongst coffee-cups, liqueur-glasses, cigar ends. "I seemed to believe it. Everything was gone and—all was over . . ." he fetched a deep sigh . . . "with me."

Lord Jim.

FROM CONRAD

THE true peace of God begins at any spot a thousand miles from the nearest land ; and when He sends there the messengers of His might it is not in terrible wrath against crime, presumption, and folly, but paternally, to chasten simple hearts—ignorant hearts that know nothing of life, and beat undisturbed by envy or greed.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

FELICITY, felicity—how shall I say it ?—is quaffed out of a golden cup in every latitude : the flavour is with you—with you alone, and you can make it as intoxicating as you please.

Lord Jim.

AND suddenly I rejoiced in the great security of the sea as compared with the unrest of the land, in my choice of that untempted life presenting no disquieting problems, invested with an elementary moral beauty by the absolute straightforwardness of its appeal and by the singleness of its purpose.

'Twiixt Land and Sea. The Secret Sharer.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

As often happens after a grey daybreak, the sun had risen in a warm and glorious splendour above the smooth immense gleam of the enlarged estuary. Wisps of mist floated like trails of luminous dust, and in the dazzling reflections of water and vapour, the shores had the murky semi-transparent darkness of shadows cast mysteriously from below. Powell, who had sailed out of London all his young seaman's life, told me that it was then, in a moment of entranced vision an hour or so after sunrise, that the river was revealed to him for all time, like a fair face often seen before, which is suddenly perceived to be the expression of an inner and unsuspected beauty, of that something unique and only its own which rouses a passion of wonder and fidelity and an unappeasable memory of its charm.

Chance.

FROM CONRAD

THE declining moon drooped sadly in the western board as if withered by the cold touch of a pale dawn. The ship slept. And the immortal sea stretched away, immense and hazy, like the image of life, with a glittering surface and lightless depths; promising, empty, inspiring—terrible.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

THEY sat in silence before the fire. There was no sound within the house, there was no sound near them; but far away on the lagoon they could hear the voices of the boatmen ringing fitful and distinct on the calm water. The fire in the bows of the sampan shone faintly in the distance with a hazy red glow. Then it died out. The voices ceased. The land and the water slept invisible, unstirring and mute. It was as though there had been nothing left in the world but the glitter of stars streaming, ceaseless and vain, through the black stillness of the night.

Tales of Unrest. The Lagoon.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE steamer moved ahead, and, passing out of the circle of light, vanished at once from our sight, dazzled by the fire which burned fiercely. And then I knew that I would see the East first as commander of a small boat. I thought it fine; and the fidelity to the old ship was fine. We should see the last of her. Oh, the glamour of youth! Oh, the fire of it, more dazzling than the flames of the burning ship, throwing a magic light on the wide earth, leaping audaciously to the sky, presently to be quenched by time, more cruel, more pitiless, more bitter than the sea—and, like the flames of the burning ship, surrounded by an impenetrable night.

Youth.

FROM CONRAD

BETWEEN the darkness of earth and heaven she was burning fiercely upon a disc of purple sea shot by the blood-red play of gleams ; upon a disc of water glittering and sinister. A high, clear flame, an immense and lonely flame, ascended from the ocean, and from its summit the black smoke poured continuously at the sky. She burned furiously, mournful and imposing like a funeral pile kindled in the night, surrounded by the sea, watched over by the stars. A magnificent death had come like a grace, like a gift, like a reward to that old ship at the end of her laborious days. The surrender of her weary ghost to the keeping of stars and sea was stirring like the sight of a glorious triumph. The masts fell just before daybreak, and for a moment there was a burst and turmoil of sparks that seemed to fill with flying fire the night patient and watchful, the vast night lying silent upon the sea. At daylight she was only a charred shell, floating still under a cloud of smoke and bearing a glowing mass of coal within.

Youth.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THERE are ships I have met more than once and known well by sight whose names I have forgotten ; but the name of that ship seen once so many years ago in the clear flush of a cold pale sunrise I have never forgotten. How could I, the first English ship on whose side I ever laid my hand ! The name—I read it letter by letter on the bow—was *James Westoll*. Not very romantic you will say. The name of a very considerable, well-known and universally respected North-Country ship-owner, I believe. James Westoll ! What better name could an honourable, hard-working ship have ? To me the very grouping of the letters is alive with the romantic feeling of her reality as I saw her floating motionless, and borrowing an ideal grace from the austere purity of the light.

We were then very near her, and, on a sudden impulse, I volunteered to pull bow in the dinghy which shoved off at once to put the pilot on board while our boat, fanned by the faint air which had attended us all through the night, went on gliding gently past the

FROM CONRAD

black glistening length of the ship. A few strokes brought us alongside, and it was then that, for the very first time in my life, I heard myself addressed in English—the speech of my secret choice, of my future, of long friendships, of the deepest affections, of hours of toil and hours of ease, and of solitary hours too, of books read, of thoughts pursued, of remembered emotions—of my very dreams! And if (after being thus fashioned by it in that part of me which cannot decay) I dare not claim it aloud as my own, then, at any rate, the speech of my children.

Some Reminiscences.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THE Red Ensign ! In the pellucid, colourless atmosphere bathing the drab and grey masses of that southern land, the livid islets, the sea of pale glassy blue under the pale glassy sky of that cold sunrise, it was as far as the eye could reach the only spot of ardent colour—flame-like, intense, and presently as minute as the tiny red spark the concentrated reflection of a great fire kindles in the clear heart of a globe of crystal. The Red Ensign—symbolic, protecting warm bit of bunting flung wide upon the seas and destined for so many years to be the only roof over my head.

Some Reminiscences.

THE lights of the earth mingled with the lights of heaven ; and above the tossing lanterns of a trawling fleet a great lighthouse shone steadily, such as an enormous riding light burning above a vessel of fabulous dimensions. Below its steady glow, the coast, stretching away straight and black,

FROM CONRAD

resembled the high side of an indestructible craft, riding motionless upon the immortal and unresting sea. The dark land lay alone in the midst of waters, like a mighty ship bestarred with vigilant lights—a ship carrying the burden of millions of lives—a ship freighted with dross and with jewels, with gold and with steel. She towered up immense and strong, guarding priceless traditions and untold suffering, sheltering glorious memories and base forgetfulness, ignoble virtues and splendid transgressions.

A great ship! For ages had the ocean battered in vain her enduring sides; she was there when the world was vaster and darker, when the sea was great and mysterious, and ready to surrender the prize of fame to audacious men. A ship mother of fleets and nations! The great flagship of the race; stronger than the storms! And anchored in the open sea.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus."

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